

ACADEMY NEWS LETTER

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August Announcement

THE REGULAR AUGUST MEETING of the California Academy of Sciences will be held in Room 214, Simson African Hall on Wednesday afternoon, August 4, 1943, at 3:30 o'clock.

The program of the meeting will be devoted to a commemoration of the life and work of James Moffitt, late Curator of the Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy of the California Academy of Sciences, and to the history of the Department with which he was associated. Brief addresses will be given by Dr. Frank M. MacFarland, President of the California Academy of Sciences, Dr. Robert C. Miller, Director of the California Academy of Sciences, Mr. Gordon H. True, Jr., of the Division of Fish and Game of the State of California, and Dr. Robert T. Orr, Assistant Curator, Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy, California Academy of Sciences.

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LIEUTENANT JAMES MOFFITT, U.S.N.R.

JAMES MOFFITT · 1900-1943

It is with deep regret that announcement is made of the death of James Moffitt, Curator of Birds and Mammals in the California Academy of Sciences, in an airplane crash on July 2, 1943, at Dutch Harbor, Alaska, while on active duty with the United States Navy. His sudden loss comes as a distinct shock to his many friends and professional associates in the field of natural history.

Born in San Francisco March 21, 1900, the eldest son of Dr. and Mrs. Herbert C. Moffitt, James Moffitt was a descendant of one of the most distinguished pioneer families of California. His early education was received in the Bay region and later was continued abroad. After enrolling in the University of California in 1917, his college career was terminated as a result of the entry of the United States into World War I. Always imbued with a strong sense of patriotism and a deep love for his country he enlisted at the age of seventeen as a cadet in the United States Navy.

Long an ardent lover of the out-of-doors, on his return to civilian life at the end of the European conflict in 1918 he became actively interested in the study of birds. The following year, at the age of nineteen, he became a member of the California Academy of Sciences, at a time when the efforts of John Ward Mailliard and Joseph Mailliard were giving a new impetus to ornithological work at the Academy. His ornithological interests were further strengthened upon his acquaintance with the late Dr. Joseph Grinnell, Director of the University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoölogy. Greatly impressed with the many opportunities in this field of study in California, Moffitt seriously began planning an account of the birds of the Lake Tahoe area, a region where he had spent many boyhood vacations. This proved a large undertaking, but it was persistently carried on over the ensuing years.

Like many young ornithologists he began making his own private collection of scientific study skins and keeping accurate records of his observations. As he was particularly interested in geese it was only natural that he should direct special effort toward assembling a representative collection of this group. His personal collection of these important game birds now represents the finest of its type in western North America. Systematic and neat in his own ways he was meticulously careful in his preparation of material. No finer examples of the art of preparing bird skins are to be found in any museum.

In 1931, following some years in the business world with the firm of Blake, Moffitt and Towne, he became a member of the staff of the California Division of Fish and Game. Here, in the Bureau of Education and Research, he again had opportunity to continue actively his work on geese. By this time he had built up a large and representative collection of the North American species and had examined the material available in most of the larger museums in the eastern United States. One of his first acts upon joining the Division of Fish and Game was to instigate an annual census of the wintering population of black brant in the bays of California. This has been continued down to the present, resulting in a valuable addition to our knowledge of the status and habits of this game bird.

In May, 1936, James Moffitt was appointed Curator of the Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy in the California Academy of Sciences, a position left vacant by the death of Harry S. Swarth. Long a member of the Academy he enthusiastically entered upon his new assignment. He had by this time published many papers relating to the natural history and economic values of western birds and mammals, and now planned to devote himself to completing his Lake Tahoe

report, and the monograph of North American geese. Unfortunately, the pressure of curatorial duties and the desire to finish a number of less extensive research projects during the few succeeding years prevented the attainment of this end. His remarkable ability for organization, however, resulted in the complete rearrangement of the Academy's large collection of birds in accordance with the most recent system of classification.

Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, as in 1917, James Moffitt's first thought was of service to his country. While endeavoring to join one of the branches of our armed forces he engaged actively in the organization of the San Francisco Civilian Defense program. In May, 1942, he was commissioned a Lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserve. Within a few weeks he was assigned to active duty and served in this status until his untimely death in the far-flung Aleutians. He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Schmiedell Moffitt, and a daughter, Mrs. Richard Gatterdam.

James Moffitt during his career as an ornithologist was the author of approximately eighty papers and held membership in a large number of scientific organizations. He was a life member of the California Academy of Sciences, a member of the American Ornithologists' Union, a director of the National Audubon Society, a member of the Cooper Ornithological Club, a member and past president of the Audubon Association of the Pacific, a member of the British Ornithologists' Union, of the Wildlife Society and of the American Society of Mammalogy. His death is a great loss to the science of ornithology, to the cause of conservation, to which he was earnestly devoted, and to his many friends in this country and abroad.



*"Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."*

PUBLISHED WRITINGS OF JAMES MOFFITT

1926. Suggested dates of open season on deer in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 12:124-127.

Notes on the white-fronted and tule geese in central California. Condor, 28:241-243.

1931. The status of the Canada goose in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 17:20-26.

Diseases reducing tree squirrel population in southern California. Calif. Fish and Game, 17:338-339.

First annual black sea brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 17:396-401.

Some protected birds the duck hunter should know. Calif. Fish and Game, 17:412-420.

Banding Canada geese in California in 1931. Condor, 33:229-237.

The status of the blue-winged teal in California. Condor, 33:247-248.

Red-breasted merganser in Orange County, California, in June. Condor, 33:252.

Wood ibis in Modoc County, California. Condor, 33:256.

1932. The downy young of some foreign species of ducks and geese. Auk, 49:214-215.

Clapper rails occur on marshes of Salton Sea, California. Condor, 34:137.

The Baikal teal taken in California. Condor, 34:193.

Second annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 18:298-310.

The Townsend solitaire in San Francisco. Condor, 34:190-191.

Recent researches into the migratory waterfowl problem on the Pacific Coast. Fifth Pacific Science Congress, pp. 4081-4085.

1933. Third annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 19:255-263.

Federal duck feeding survey. Calif. Fish and Game, 19:271-272.

Study of Pacific Coast deer. Calif. Fish and Game, 19:274.

Wild animal importation law. Calif. Fish and Game, 19:274-275.

Second state fair deer head exhibit. Calif. Fish and Game, 19:276-277.

[Review of] Leopold's "Game Management." Calif. Fish and Game, 19:280-281.

Food habits of coyotes. [A review of "Autumn food habits of coyotes, a report of progress, 1932" by Charles C. Sperry.] Calif. Fish and Game, 19:284-286.

1934. History of the Yosemite elk herd. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:37-51.

Mule deer study program. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:52-66.

New fish and game code. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:67-68.

- Regulations governing importation of certain wild birds and animals. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:68.
- Oregon adopts upland game bird land-owner contract law. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:77-78.
- Waterfowl abundance in California in 1933. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:78-79.
- Another "new" deer for California. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:81.
- Death of buck deer result of fighting in rut. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:82-84.
- Deer fencing law repealed. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:84.
- Deer hunting success in Angeles National forest. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:84-85.
- [Review of] Sheldon's deer of California. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:85-87.
- [Review of] Grinnell's review of California mammal fauna. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:87-91.
- Federal wild-life restoration program. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:163-166.
- 1933 deer kill statistics. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:166.
- Deer herd winters well. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:166.
- Revised estimate of 1933 California waterfowl abundance. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:167-168.
- Addition to list of totally excluded animals—state importation law. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:168.
- Funds for federal wild-life restoration program shrink. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:287.
- In memory of F. W. Van Sicklen. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:288.
- Early black-tailed deer breeding record. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:291.
- Unusual age attained by wild geese. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:291-292.
- Sand-grouse liberated in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:292-295.
- Fourth annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 20:355-364.
- Food habits of coyotes. [A review of "Autumn food habits of coyotes, a report of progress, 1932" by Charles C. Sperry.] Outdoor Nebraska, 9:5, 11. (Reprinted from Calif. Fish and Game, 19:284-286.)
1935. Fifth annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 21:343-350.
- Waterfowl shooting losses indicated by banding returns. Trans. 21st Amer. Game Conf., pp. 305-308.
1936. Sixth annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 22:295-300.
1937. The white-cheeked goose in California. Condor, 39:149-159.
- Seventh annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 23:290-295.

1938. Environmental factors affecting waterfowl in the Suisun area, California. Condor, 40:76-84.
Two southern petrels in the north Pacific. Auk, 55:255-259.
The downy young of *Dendragapus*. Auk, 55:589-595.
Notes on the distribution of loons and grebes in California. Condor, 40:261-262.
[with R. T. Orr.] Recent disastrous effects of oil pollution on birds in the San Francisco Bay region. Calif. Fish and Game, 24:239-244.
Eighth annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 24:341-346.
1939. Notes on the distribution of sooty shearwater, white pelican, and cormorants in California. Condor, 41:32-33.
Notes on the distribution of herons in California. Condor, 41:81-82.
Notes on the distribution of whistling swan and Canada goose in California. Condor, 41:93-97.
Notes on the distribution of the lesser Canada goose and cackling goose in California. Condor, 41:164-166.
The California coast between Fort Bragg and Capetown. Gull, 21:42-64.
Ninth annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 25:336-342.
1940. The ring-necked duck in northern California. Gull, 22:13-15.
Clapper rail project. Gull, 22:45-46.
Third record of the king eider in California. Condor, 42:305.
An apparently authentic record of the spectacled eider for California. Condor, 42:309.
[National Audubon Society kite posters.] Condor, 42:310.
Tenth annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 26:381-389.
1941. Creepers and sequoias. Condor, 43:75-76.
[Review of R. T. Peterson's] A field guide to western birds. Wilson Bulletin, 53:203-204.
Notes on the food of the California clapper rail. Condor, 43:270-273.
Eleventh annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 27:216-233.
[with C. Cottam] Eelgrass depletion on the Pacific coast and its effect upon black brant. U. S. Dept. Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Leaflet 204. 26 pp.
1942. Apparatus for marking wild animals with colored dyes. Journ. Wildlife Management, 6:312-318.
A nesting colony of ring-billed gulls in California. Condor, 44:105-107.
1943. Twelfth annual black brant census in California. Calif. Fish and Game, 29:19-28.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

NOTICE IS HEREBY given to all Corporate Members that the Council at its meeting of July 16, 1943, approved the applications of Mr. Hugh O'Connor and Mr. Cecil A. Poole, for MEMBERSHIP in the California Academy of Sciences. If no objection to the election of these applicants be received at the office of the Academy within two weeks after July 30, they will be considered elected.